

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program  
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control,  
River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006 (Proposition 84)**

**Subregion:** NORTH CENTRAL **County:** BUTTE

**Applicant:** BUTTE COUNTY FIRE SAFE COUNCIL

**Project Title:** DEFENSIBLE SPACE CHIPPER PROGRAM

**Reference Number:** SNC 070295

**PROJECT SCOPE**

The project would fund approximately 40 days of chipping by a Contract Chipping Service to provide residents an alternative to pile burning as part of the defensible space program. Pile burning on private lands has been one of the most common points of ignition for fires that escape within the county, causing catastrophic results within the urban interface and the watershed. By chipping instead of burning, the potential for escape fire and destruction of watershed values is significantly lessened. The project would continue other work in fuel reduction within the urban interface areas of Butte County, and specifically around the city of Paradise.

Specific actions to successfully complete this project include:

- Hiring a contractor for chipping services;
- Offering assistance to homeowners in the urban interface around the city of Paradise;
- Achieving defensible space objectives on approximately 293 acres.

**PROJECT SCHEDULE**

<b>DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Volunteers check condition of landowner-stacked piles	June 2008
Asst. Director coordinates with residents, volunteers and contractor	April 2008-June 2008
Chipping completed on individual home sites	June 2008-October 2008
End of season meetings with contractors and volunteers	October –December 2008
Assess program with contractors and volunteers	December 2008
<b>Final Report/Final Payment Request</b>	<b>June 2009</b>

**PROJECT COSTS**

<b>PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES</b>	<b>TOTAL SNC FUNDING</b>
Chipping contractor	\$52,800
FSC staff travel and oversight	\$38,390
Supplies, printing of end of season program survey letter, postage	\$2,385
Administrative	\$4,870
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$98,445</b>

**Letters of Support:**

- Bureau of Land Management, California State Office

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommendation is to fund this project at the requested level of \$98,445.

## **Defensible Space Chipping Program**

### **2. Project Summary**

The Butte County Fire Safe Council Defensible Space Chipper Program protects watershed values in six major watersheds including: Big Chico Creek, Little Chico Creek, Butte Creek, Cherokee, Upper Feather River and Lower Feather River/Honcut Watersheds. These major watersheds contain 23 listed and another 29 eligible communities at risk from wildfire within a Wildland Urban Interface Zone (WUI). The growing number of homes in these WUI communities significantly increases the risk of a fire spreading from residents into any one of Butte County's major watersheds.

All of Butte County's major watersheds contain hazardous fuels conditions such as: extensive and continuous fuels, very heavy fuel loading in critical locations and concentrations of highly flammable fuels in locations where frequent ignitions are more likely to occur.

The Chipper Program will serve to protect multiple watershed values: drinking water supplies, critical habitat, wild and scenic river designation and water oriented recreation in Butte County's major watersheds.

The Butte County Fire Safe Council Chipper Program has successfully reduced the risk of resident source ignitions from spreading into watersheds since 2001. The Program has assisted 2,159 residents and chipped 2,455 acres since it began. The program promotes sustainability by giving residents a tool to use to be good stewards to their land.

### **Project Goals**

Goal 1. Protect Butte County Watersheds from Wildfire -- By reducing fuels we reduce the probability of fires starting within communities and around homes, escaping initial attack and developing into a watershed fires. By chipping the fuels that have been removed from around homes and putting them back on the ground the fire carrying capacity of the fuel is reduced while serving to protect the watershed. The chips will prevent soil erosion, will provide soil nutrients and can reduce unwanted weeds and vegetative regrowth.

Goal 2. Provide Residents with an Alternative to Burning-- Eliminate the need for homeowners to conduct "debris burning" in order to get rid of vegetative waste which they have cut around their homes and property, thus reducing the risk of an escape debris fire developing into a watershed fire and assisting with the reduction of smoke in the air. Major fires in Butte County have occurred due to debris burning.

Goal 3. Assist Residents to Create Defensible Space -- By chipping the last phase of all hazardous fuels reduction is allowed to be completed.

Goal 4. Provide 44 days of Chipping service and treat 293 acres for Butte County residents.